YOUR DAUGHTER'S MOTHER

By
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MODERN METHODS of analyzing adults to discover the hidden springs of character and conduct have added emphasis to the importance of early and sane sex instruction of children. Such analyses have shown that impressions received in early childhood play a much greater part in determining lifelong habits of thought and feeling than was guessed when conscious memory alone was consulted. It is now known that besides the recollections he can call to mind at will, every adult possesses a great body of memory impressions which lie at the base of his character development and determine much of its bent, though he may be able to recall none of them. The man who as a boy of six was accidentally locked in a dark closet may have forgotten the occurrence and be utterly unable to account for a horror of closed places and an absurd fear of the dark, till the psycho-analyst brings the hidden shock to light and destroys its power by making it a matter of the consciousness. The woman who cannot sleep within earshot of a ticking clock may suffer from the impression made on her childish mind by the loud sound of a clock in the room where her little brother lay dying. The child mind is indeed "wax to receive and marble to retain." Just as an explosion too near his ear while he is still a blind pup may make a thoroughbred setter dog forever "gun shy" and useless in the hunting field, so do shocks received in the impressionable time of childhood warp and impair the character for all the years of life.

First Impressions Are Important

In no class of experiences is this more often true than in the occurrences which give a girl her first impression of sex, and psychologists and physicians are making us realize the damage done by a wrong way of obtaining such knowledge. Mysteries and taboos, originating in the days when our primitive parents, not recognizing the biological facts of reproduction, attributed germinating power to the sun's rays, to winds, to magic, and to demons, have surrounded the subject through the ages, and have given rise to fears and misunderstandings, sometimes added to by unintelligent elders as aids to control, which play a woeful part in modern life.

Old and New Myths

Many mothers, forgetting their own childhood, assume that a daughter will arrive at adolescence perfectly aware that flowers come from seeds and birds from eggs, but never questioning that the stork brings the baby or that it arrives in the case the doctor carries. To the fairly modern myth of the doctor many misconceptions may be attributed. The birth of a child can never seem a natural thing to a girl who is taught first to associate it with illness and the doctor's visit, and neither the older nor the newer myth will satisfy an intelligent child. Absolute ignorance of sex is impossible and, if it were possible, would have no greater right to be called innocence than has ignorance of arithmetic.

The average little girl asks where the babies come from the first time she sees one, and one of two things happens. She is told the stork brought it and, accepting the tale for the time being, airs her new information to more sophisticated playmates who promptly enlighten her with the casual brutality of childhood, or she detects in the adult manner something of the "that-isn't-a-nice-thing-for-a-little-girl-to-talk-about" tone. Children are exceedingly sensitive to tone implications, and since their training, of necessity, includes endless prohibitions, they speedily add the matter of where babies come from to their growing store of things that must not be talked of openly. Certain normal functions, the little girls knows, are not talked of "before folks" because they are offensive; it is natural for her to put the origin of babies into this class, and with many thousand women, unhappily, in that class it stays forever.

The Truth Is Best

When the truth is thus refused, curiosity is stimulated, and the mother who plants the idea of shameful secrecy in her little girl's mind forgets that she has barred the child from friendly confidence with her and from one chance of obtaining knowledge in a right and wholesome way. Right-minded adults will not inform a child, knowing that its mother objects to its possession of the knowledge. There is left the whispering of school-mates, the possible sniggering revelations of servants, or the misinterpretations of adults' talk overheard. It is impossible to guard a little girl against these things without locking her up alone in a windowless cell. Keeping the right view from her only insures that she will get a gross view. Many a mother bewails the attitude of opposition a daughter assumes in her teens, without guessing that a coarse and unwholesome idea of sex previously imparted to her lies at the root of it. It should not be forgotten that if the sex relation is grossly pictured to a girl the inevitable result is conscious or unconscious contempt or shame for her mother.

An Early Start Is Wise

In these days, when the importance of sex instruction is widely admitted, it is recognized that there still remains among many parents uncertainty as to the methods and age at which the first information ought to be given. Many mothers think it sufficient if they stand ready to answer all questions that the little girl may ask, waiting till she does ask. The objection to waiting or to setting any definite time for revelation is that it can never be known how long the little girl wonders before she asks, nor can any mother be sure that she is the first person to whom the query will be addressed. The little girl of four, seeing a new baby in the park, may very well have asked its nurse or hers where it came from and may have deduced from the giggling evasions or a smirching explanation at greater length that the subject is indecent. Further, the child who has shown no interest in the coming of babies may nevertheless have had information forced on it. A mother has sadly forgotten her childhood if she believes children speak among themselves only of things they repeat to their mothers, and she was never a real girl if she does not know with what well-kept vows a child accepts a secret from other children.

No Need for Mystery

It is not wise to wait till a girl asks questions. Her instruction in sex should begin as soon as she can understand simple words, for sex education is not a thing that can be given in an hour or in a day, like a new crochet stitch; it cannot be added to any completed scheme of education without remaining an excrescent and therefore disproportionate thing. It must be an integral part of child training from the beginning, if sex and its relations and influences are to take their right place in the forming character. The ideal sex education begins with taking sex as much for granted from the beginning as possible, never permitting it to assume the alluring veil of mystery. None of us can remember when she did not know that chickens are hatched from eggs and we cannot recall that we were ever shocked at being told that eggs are laid by hens. The hen's business of laying eggs has never been a mystery; it has always been talked about openly and freely; nobody has ever said that little girls must not talk about hens, or that the mother hen finds her babies in the parsley bed. If a mother can bring herself to see that the origin of human life need be no more mysterious, she will find that the matter of explaining where the baby comes from will be simple.

Nature Study Helps

The explanation can be made to any little girl who knows about chickens and the laying of eggs, and if she has never seen a poultry yard, there are city zoos to visit or shops where hens and chickens are displayed. All little birds and all

little chickens are hatched from eggs which their mothers lay; so are babies, only that babies are hatched before and not after they are laid. "Laid" and "hatched" are words within a very small girl's understanding, and her association with them is wholesome and sweet. Explaining the baby's coming in terms of the familiar hen makes the new fact a part of the already understood and understandable world of the child. A new term inevitably becomes the nucleus of a group of new associations, and since the purpose, or one of the purposes, of early sex instruction is to create in the little girl a feeling that reproduction is an everyday fact, common in normal life and no more to be set off by itself than the fact that the sun rises, the use of familiar words and figures is desirable. If the explanation is made before the little girl's curiosity has been especially aroused, the average child will show so little interest in the revelation as to surprise the adult, to whom a wholly simple and uncomplicated point of view toward sex is well-nigh impossible. The mother's difficulty will not be with the little daughter but with herself. If she can speak of babies in exactly the same quality of voice she uses when she talks of kittens and puppies, she may be happy in the assurance that she has given her child an impression of the process of birth so sane and normal, so akin to all the world's life, that nothing afterward can wholly efface it.

Don't Make It a Personal Story

Personal implications should be avoided, especially with small girls. The average child asks where babies come from, not how she herself came. She does not think of herself as ever having been a baby, for so far as she can remember she never was one. Normally, it is the coming of other children that interests her. It is doubtful whether in giving the initial information it is well to attach any suggestion of mother love. It is sometimes assumed that the child, on hearing that her nest was within the maternal body, will instantly say that now she understands why her mother loves her or why she loves her mother, but this is by no means a universal truth. The average little girl is seldom so self-conscious. She does not say to herself, though she is often required to say it to others, that she loves her mother or that her mother loves her. Her love for her mother is as much a part of her life as the act of breathing and often is quite as unconscious. Much of the antagonism between mothers and daughters, an antagonism which in essence is natural as daughters grow toward mature independence, arises from insistence on making the relation conscious and expressed. Let the little girl, then, know that babies come into the world just like kittens or like the eggs from which the chickens hatch, and leave her to determine whether mother-and-daughter love is the result of the mere mechanism of birth.

Sound Teaching Grows Strong Roots

The advantage of having these roughly sketched facts clear in the mind of a little girl is that, once there on the high authority of the mother, no other information can displace them. It is a delicate question whether the child should be cautioned against speaking of her knowledge to other children. Until growing experience and reason enable her to understand that some things are not talked of because they are sacred, that is, precious and not because they are improper, and that there are "family" affairs and confidences which are not to be discussed with outsiders, it may not be possible to secure her silence. But it is infinitely better that your child should impart truth without stain to the children next door, however much their foolish mother may be horrified, than that the spotless snow of your little girl's mind should be soiled by the soot of their misinformation or ignorant conjectures.

The Father's Part

Once the matter of where the baby comes from is settled, it may be wise to wait until the most opportune time for the story of the father's part in reproduction. Ordinarily, however, this should be told before the child goes to school, in order to forestall unwholesome interpretations likely to come from other children. It can be given at one time as a supplement to the mother's part, or can be given gradually as opportunity offers or is made. Life brings her the general idea of two parents, and if she has the opportunity that acquaintance with domestic animals or the keeping of pets gives, the thought of the world as generally bi-sexual is unconsciously acquired. The mother who has at heart the success of the tremendously important business of motherhood will not be content with reading the standard books on the physical care of children alone. She will inform herself of the cardinal facts of child psychology and will learn somewhat of the history of the family as an institution. The nearest librarian will gladly offer suggestions for non-technical readings which will serve as a basis for stories of the world's early days.

Children are always delighted with tales of the infancy of the race, and the position of the father can be given importance socially before the physical relation to conception is taught. What the helplessness of babies has meant in the development of society and the home is an interesting story to tell a child. She readily understands why permanent homes and families are necessary, and what mother love and fatherly protection have always meant to children.

The Arts As an Aid

A general conception of the advantages of having two parents can be built up. If a girl has a love of music, music can be utilized in sex education. Here, for example, is the melody of a Chopin étude, played as a melody alone. That is the mother of the piece. We add the lower notes, the wonderful "second voice," or father, and have a resultant harmony, the child of the two. If a girl enjoys her color box, that, too, can be used. Orange is a union of red and yellow, and we cannot possibly have green, orange, or purple without two parent colors. The union of two colors to make a third, like both and yet not quite like either, may serve by analogy as a background for the information that among the backbone animals and most kinds of flowering plants every egg or seed that grows is made up of two cells; no egg cell grows until the other cell has joined it; this joining is fertilization. By it the offspring inherit qualities from both father and mother.

Heredity Comes from Both Parents

Fertilization is a somewhat difficult thing to explain fully without a biological foundation, but the rudimentary knowledge necessary can be obtained by the reading of any one of several excellent non-technical books prepared especially for the use of parents. It is usual to explain first the fertilization of fish eggs. After they are laid by the female fish, the male fish through an organ with which he is provided, pours over them milt or fertilizing cells. Among birds and warm-blooded animals fertilization is accomplished in much the same way, except that the eggs are fertilized before and not after they are laid. This is the simplest explanation that can be given, and the child who is not greatly interested in the subject will be content with it. The more inquiring child may be given further biological detail, and some mothers find nature study with their children exceedingly profitable and interesting.

The facts should be fixed in a child's mind before she is permitted to form intimate friendships with other little girls and should be fully understood before the beginning of the emotional stirrings of adolescence which commonly precede the physical changes of that period by a year at least. The bare facts, which can be amplified later, are sufficient protection against the distressing misinformation of other children. The object, as the girl grows, should be to direct her mind away from the purely physical aspects of sex to its wider secondary meanings. What marriage and parenthood really mean, the home teaches. No girl can grow up seeing the relation of the sexes in terms of beauty unless the relation between her father and mother is beautiful. The best lessons in sex education—or the worst—are given her by the daily conduct and attitude

of the parents. With the fine loyalty of childhood, she will idealize her parents if she is given even a meager chance, but if the poor pretense fail, there is nothing left with which to build up a right conception to hand on, in turn, to her children. For example the unconscious fear of sex which is the hidden cause of so much nervous instability in after life, is not seldom engendered by quarreling parents. It is useless to present the primary facts of sex sweetly and sanely unless the secondary implications and associations are imparted through the daily lesson of a harmonious home.

Growing Up We are accustomed to think of preadolescent girls as sexless and to proceed on this unwarranted assumption. It is a notion which belongs to the time when sex was taboo and therefore a thing to be ignored as long as possible. Seen rationally, a little girl is always an embryo woman, and at how early an age she possesses the reticence of normal womanhood we cannot know. Her father's men friends kiss and caress her and would be honestly indignant if they were told that her feeling in the matter is that of a woman, not that of a child; yet it is most certainly true that many a sensitive little girl of six is as much embarrassed and inwardly affronted by undesired caresses as she would be at twenty. The reserve and dignity of a young girl are possessions too precious to be endangered in this way. The privilege of kissing her should be reserved to her parents and to her immediate family. We teach the adolescent girl most carefully to permit no liberties from men. The teaching is without avail if liberties in childhood have blunted her delicacy. We cannot logically expect a girl to kiss everybody at ten and become suddenly, at fourteen, too big to be kissed. Respect, then, the beautful reticence of your little daughter; it is her truest instinct, her greatest safeguard, and once lost can never be replaced. Do not imagine, either, that early sex consciousness is abnormal or ugly. When it manifests itself in a dislike of familiarities, it is a wholesome response for which any girl's mother may well be thankful.

Child Hygiene The hygiene of childhood should of course include cleanliness of the sex organs, as well as other body parts. Curiosity or actual handling may lead little girls as well as little boys to the discovery of pleasant sensations in these organs, but this is not likely to develop into a habit unless tight clothing or other conditions bring about local irritations. Examination in infancy by a physician will determine whether any abnormality exists and if it does it should be remedied at once so that discomfort will not continue the practice. Undergarments should not be permitted to bind or chafe

the sensitive vulva. For this reason every mother should be careful in buying ready-made garments. They are seldom cut so as to give room enough. Handling of the genitals should be put on a par with other undesirable habits, in the training of a girl, but should not be emphasized. It is unwise to implant in the mind of a little girl any suggestions about masturbation. The family physician should be asked to advise concerning any child who does develop such a habit. Frightening a child about it is likely to do more harm than good.

Physiology for the Growing Girl

Experience has taught that it is not wise to leave a girl in ignorance of the physiology of womanhood till menstruation is imminent. The child should have the benefit of knowledge and understanding about its processes and meaning from both the personal and social points of view. Here again, a mother cannot be sure that information will not come to her daughter in some unwholesome way unless early right knowledge makes misconception impossible. A woman physician tells of a most distressing result of lack of knowledge. A little girl of ten suddenly became markedly unhappy, showed a strange fear of her mother, coupled with an unusual desire to be near her and to serve her. The child sobbed and screamed in her sleep and her health was seriously affected. With great difficulty the physician succeeded in drawing from the heart-broken little girl the truth. She had accidentally come upon evidence that her mother was menstruating and believed that her adored mother would soon die of cancer. Cancer had been discussed before her in detail, but menstruation, a normal function, had never even been hinted at. More than one unwarned girl has been so terribly frightened at her first menstruation that her whole attitude toward the special functions of woman has been forever tinged with dislike and fear.

It is wise, therefore, to explain menstruation to your daughter several years before her first menstrual period. Explain that it is a natural thing connected with the ability to bear children and still more intimately connected with the proper functioning of the ovaries. Emphasis should be placed on the double function of the ovaries—the production of ova and the formation of the secretion on which the maturing and health of mind and body depend. The scientific names and the functions of the organs of reproduction must be taught and associated with the teaching of the proper names and functions of all the other parts of the body. If a little girl is taught a puerile and incorrect name for any part of the body she will always feel a certain embarrassment in speaking the scientific name when she tardily adds it to her vocabulary.

The object in training the ten or eleven-year-old girl the physical facts of adolescence is to free the first menstruation from any attendant unexpectedness. The girl who understands will take it as a matter of course and will usually experience little distress of mind and body. Unquestionably, much of the unwholesome attitude of women toward womanhood and motherhood is due to the attitude of their mothers toward menstruation. It is needless to talk of the misery of woman-hood, the evils of womanhood and the sacredness of womanhood and yet treat the physical evidence of womanhood's approach as a dreadful affliction, a matter necessarily to be dreaded and concealed as scandalous. [illegible] just as other natural functions are concerned about which [illegible] but the girl must be trained to [illegible]. We do not wish over the boy who [illegible] but we know that [illegible] have to [illegible] day in the rest of his life and that shaving will occasion [illegible] discomfort as well as loss of time. We then [illegible] over this normal natural process [illegible] of menstruation. [illegible] new possibilities of [illegible] new powers of mind and body will [illegible] a [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] young women [illegible] among [illegible] about a coming hope. Even that natural [illegible] suggests to realize [illegible] [illegible] to boys. Natural [illegible] and [illegible] differ [illegible] from a [illegible] [illegible] consult the family [illegible]. Do not [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] make her [illegible] of [illegible] great care [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Understanding Your Daughter

In the early teens the great needs of a girl are simple and quiet living and sympathetic understanding. **You will best understand your daughter if you** will be content not to understand her. Recall your own girlhood, your own secret fancies, your own rebellion at discipline and remember that besides being yourself over again, your daughter is like her father's sister, perhaps whom you never knew. You cannot expect to understand her perfectly any more than you can expect any human being to understand you, perfectly at all times. Above all take your daughter seriously and do not laugh at any of her interests. If she wishes to pour herself out endlessly in a diary, never hint that diaries are silly. Censor her no more than is absolutely necessary and be especially careful what you say about the way in which she wears her hair. It is not obstinacy nor lack of love for you that prompts the hairdressing her father fumes about and you deplore. It is the wholesome instinct of present success. It is the way to be a conforming citizen of the girl world. It is the reverse of the love of the beautiful and many a girl who will take her mother's advice about other points of personal appearance will resent bitterly any interference with the way she wears her hair.

Dress and Fathers and Mothers

In dress, your daughter will wish to be like her associates and there you must consider. If they are suitably dressed girls she will like suitable frocks. If they are showy and cheap you will dislike it. It is wise always to keep a little more with your daughter than you at first know, and an excellent way of doing this is to make trips with her clothes as she passes from grade to grade. Her teacher can tell you what girls influence her. What girls are conducting themselves. Except in extraordinary circumstances it is never wise to attempt to break off a friendship by command. Instead you must find a substitute. A motherly girl is easily found in the neighborhood and a chance to practice her love of being [illegible] is helpful. A little attention to the impressionable girl will go further. Watch her choice and encourage her when you can, and a woman's talk will accomplish more than assertion of authority.

Your daughter will have times of [illegible] during adolescence and these are interesting to watch. Her new [illegible] goes to the antipodes of [illegible] of the way in which she must respect her father or her mother. Try to be [illegible] especially important during this period. For she is quite likely to [illegible] girl will copy her. Your ideals and [illegible] herself what a girl regards as of more importance now than ever before. In childhood the spoiled girl takes her brother's books,

disdaining the sugary fiction prepared especially for girls. This is a taste to be encouraged. Tales of derring-do are never harmful. It is when the love of romance stirs that the reading list must be watched, but if the home library contains nothing cheap and of questionable taste, a liking for objectionable books will not be formed. The romantic young girl craves sweets for both body and mind, and if the love stories she likes seem to you ephemeral and even silly, do not tell her so. If they are stories of honest love and pure devotion, however, far-fetched and improbable, the candy will not hurt her. Your nearest librarian will gladly give you lists of romantic stories of sound taste.

Boy and Girl Friendships

The greatest good fortune your daughter can possess during her childhood and her teens is a home to which all her friends like to come, and she is additionally fortunate if she has boy as well as girl friends. Mothers are often puzzled to know what in the world boys and girls find so interesting in their interminable, pointless, give-and-take conversations, but the mother is wise who makes her front porch or her front parlor a club room for the boys and girls of the neighborhood. If the careless boy friendships can be continued through adolescence, it is a thing for which a mother may give thanks. It is a commonplace that a mother must show an interest in her daughter's friends, but it is not a commonplace that a mother must seem to take them at their own valuation. If the boy who carries your daughter's school-books home is introduced as "Mister," treat him as you would a grown man. A successful mother must be always ready to be taught many things she already knows by a generation which is just discovering them.

Ethics and Etiquette

Perhaps no other way of "managing" a girl is so effective as asking her advice. At fourteen or fifteen she will have very decided views as to how the sitting-room ought to be prepared and as to how mother's new frocks ought to be made, and the wise mother, smiling in secret at her daughter's air of responsibility toward her, tactfully encourages it.

Thorough training in good manners is the greatest protection a girl can be given, and from the first the ethical significance of the conventions must be explained. The little girl must be trained to a knowledge of the formulae of politeness in the understanding that proper manners give pleasure to others. Many a little girl appears shy and awkward merely because she is not spontaneous and has not been taught exactly what to say. Such a child suffers agonies when she is bidden to "speak to Mrs. Jones," because she does not know what words to use in the

greeting. Be sure the formal words are taught your daughter, for with the inexplicable reticence of childhood she may never ask, and may either remain awkward or assume the noisy rudeness with which shy children, and shy adults, too, mask their embarrassment.

Consideration for others should be taught a girl as a thing due herself and she cannot begin too young to understand that she must keep her standards high. She is an American girl, a citizen of the state; she must be worthy of her citizenship or she is not "playing fair." Family pride is an excellent thing when it leads to high ideals of character and conduct. It is entirely possible, without turning a girl into a prig, to make her feel that she is responsible for the influence she exercises over other girls and boys. If she permits a boy to be cavalier with her, she lessens his respect for all girls. As she grows older she must be taught that well-bred young girls do not let strange young men scrape acquaintance with them. The young man who tries to do this is not a gentleman, and your daughter ("Father's daughter," "Mother's daughter") will not wish to know a person who does not measure up the right standard. Impress upon her that there is no exception to this rule. A young man who really wishes to meet a girl he respects can always find ways of doing it. He can make acquaintance with persons who know her and convince them that he is a suitable man to introduce. Most mature women can recall young men who took great trouble to find an introduction. Your daughter should be made to feel that her acquaintance is a privilege, a thing worth having; it is not a thing to be picked up in the street like a scrap of waste paper. In traveling or in emergencies a man will offer his services, but assistance graciously received does not constitute acquaintance. It is a curious commentary on the wisdom of many mothers that they will not hire a servant without references nor engage a dressmaker without careful inquiry, but they will admit to their homes young men, casually introduced, of whom they know nothing. No young man of good character objects to furnishing information about himself if it is tactfully asked for, and indeed most young men are pleased to know that the home they enter is a place in which the undesirable person is not welcome.

Medical Information

Of the perils of venereal disease the adolescent girl needs to know little. A knowledge that there are such diseases can be given her as a part of her information on dangerous diseases in general. The infrequent transmission of such diseases through kissing, common drinking cups, towels, and other extragenital means needs no emphasis, as other considerations of cleanliness and custom will develop views and habits sufficient to protect the girl from

these diseases. The scientific facts about the nature and seriousness of these infections should be made clear in later adolescence or early womanhood; the young woman should know that their chief method of spread is through sexual contact, but she must not be made to suspect every man she meets. The practice of requiring a clean bill of health before marriage is now common among intelligent parents. This and general assurance that the young men who are "attentive" to your daughter are men of healthy minds and bodies are matters for parents, not daughters. Too much talk of venereal disease to a girl whose experience of life is perforce small usually leads to morbidity and ugly fear.

Guide, Counsellor And Friend

The successful mother will be in her daughter's confidence, but this does not mean that her daughter will tell her "everything." No wise mother expects that. All the things that are of importance a girl will tell her mother if her confidence has not been repelled or her queer attempts at explaining herself laughed at, but most of what she considers real secrets will go into the ear of her bosom friend only. Mother is the safe port to run to in a storm; but it is her chum with whom she sails to the Isle of Dreams.

Your daughter will be free with you at sixteen, only if you have been her best friend at six, and she will never be really and absolutely confiding till she is a woman grown. It is the unwise mother, forgetful of her own girlhood, who says, "My daughter tells me everything." The wise mother hides her time, watchfully waiting for the fuller intimacy of maturity, and says—to herself only—"Thank God, my daughter tells me everything worth telling. The rest I do not need to know, for I was a girl myself, and I have not forgotten."

THE AMERICAN SOCIAL HYGIENE ASSOCIATION

has been since 1914 the national voluntary agency for social hygiene. Its purposes is to encourage, strengthen and preserve American family life, by such means as

Health Protection—through prevention and treatment of the health enemies syphilis and gonorrhea

Good Environment—Through provision for wholesome use of leisure time, exclusion of degrading amusements and repression of commercialized prostitution.

Successful Living—amplified and safeguarded by sound sex instruction and education for marriage and family relations.

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